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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 002737

SIPDIS

NOTE BY CIB: PROCESS AS IS PER EAO STEVE ROYSTER"

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2013

TAGS: PREL IT AG LY MO SY TS LE EUN

SUBJECT: FM FRATTINI'S VISIT TO SIX ARAB COUNTIES PRIOR TO ITALY'S EU PRESIDENCY

REF: A. SECSTATE 157980

1B. ROME 2642

Classified By: ACTING POL MC JOHN BASS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: FM Frattini's pre-EU Presidency visits to Rabat, Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, Beirut, and Damascus June 4-9 showcased Italy's priority on improving Euro-Med cooperation but otherwise generated no surprises. Frattini introduced Italy's EU Presidency priorities, promoted the roadmap and stressed the importance of seizing the current window of opportunity to advance the MEPP. Frattini repeated the US' and Italy's serious reservations about Libya's UNSC candidacy; FM Shalgam said Qadhafi would make the final decision. The Syrian and Lebanese Presidents asked to add a "Syrian and Lebanese track" to the roadmap. End summary.

Libya

12. (C) Pol NEA Watcher met with Antonio Bellavia and Luca Ferrari, the MFA's office directors for Libya/Maghreb countries and the Eastern Med, respectively, to get a read-out on Frattini's June 4-9 trip to the Middle and Near East. Frattini met Qadhafi, PM Shameck and FM Shalgam June 15. According to Bellavia, Shalgam told Frattini that Libya has not yet decided for sure to pursue a UNSC seat and that the final decision on this matter would be Qadhafi's (ref B). Shalgam added that Libya expects to solve the Lockerbie case by the end of the year, thus eliminating the main obstacle in front of a Libya candidacy. Frattini stressed to Shalgam that, even if Libya were to meet its obligations regarding the Pan Am 103 bombing by the end of 2003, the US and Italy would still find Libya's UNSC candidacy inappropriate. Frattini explained that it would still take more time for Libya to establish a track record of contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security, a UN charter prerequisite for membership on the SC (ref A), before the international community could view Libya's UNSC candidacy favorably. On the MEPP, Shalgam was neither in favor nor against the roadmap. He said that "what is good for the Palestinians is good for Libya."

THE MAGHREB COUNTRIES

13. (C) Frattini met Moroccan PM Jettou June 4, Tunisian FM Ben Yahia June 6 and Algerian President Bouteflika and FM Belqhadem June 7. Frattini stressed the need to seize the opportunity created by the Sharm El Sheikh and Al Aqaba summits to advance the MEPP and urged the three Maghreb countries to support the roadmap. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria supported the roadmap and promised to do what they could to promote peace in the Middle East. According to Bellavia, Frattini also tried to eliminate widespread concerns in the Maghreb countries that the EU enlargement to the East would diminish the EU's commitment to the Med region. Frattini underlined that the Med region is a priority of the Italian EU Presidency. Italy will host a Euro-Med conference in Naples in early December. Frattini said that Italy supports the idea of establishing a bank to fund development projects in the Southern Med region as well as a foundation that promotes cultural dialogue between Arab and European Med countries.

SYRIA AND LEBANON

14. (C) Frattini met Lebanese President Lahoud and FM Obeid June 8 and Syrian President Assad and FM Al-Shara June 9. According to Ferrari, Lahoud and Assad stressed the need to "activate the Lebanese and Syrian track" to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Assad suggested having another roadmap or amending the existing one for that purpose. He specifically proposed that, during the Italian Presidency, the EU would work with Syria on developing a mechanism based on the principles of the Madrid Conference and UN resolutions 242 and 338 in order to re-launch negotiations. Frattini underscored Italy's commitment to the MEPP, stressed that the GOI plans to

cooperate closely with the US during its EU Presidency, and that negotiations should reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution that includes Syria and Lebanon.

15. (C) Comment: Frattini's trip to the above six Arab countries, just prior to PM Berlusconi's trip to Israel, Jordan and Egypt (to be reported septel), stresses the great emphasis the Italian EU Presidency will place on the MEPP and the Med region. When it comes to the Middle and Near East, there seems to be a division of labor between Berlusconi and Frattini, with Berlusconi keeping the "sexier" portfolio to himself.

Sembler

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